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# Review of *Indian Voices: Listening to Native Americans* by Alison Owings

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Americans, most of whom are unknown outside of their own communities.

Owings's accounts entwine the contemporary with the past. The reader finds intelligent first-hand reflections on how treaties, allotments, reorganization, relocation, termination, federal recognition, NAGPRA, and other federal policies, alongside blood quantum controversies and gaming, have influenced individuals, families, and tribes. Common myths are debunked through these commentaries, especially in "Indians 101," by Osage attorney Elizabeth Lohah Homer. The more personal aspects of these accounts help remind academics and policymakers of the people behind issues and policies.

Identity is a significant thread throughout the book. Many of the interviewees are of mixed heritage and have lived at least some of their lives off the reservation, and their varied experiences and perspectives on the dominant forces in their lives provide much to ponder. Those with strong connections to tribal traditions often speak of the critical influence of their grandparents. Ojibwe Elder Rosemary Berens reflects on the challenges for contemporary grandparents to pass on their heritage and language, in the midst of so many competing forces for the attention of young people.

Traveling with Owings through the homes, workplaces, local cafes, and ceremonies of her subjects, the reader experiences the unique constellations of land, heritage, and circumstance that have shaped the cultures represented by these individuals and comes to appreciate that some qualities transcend the differences. Indian communities, throughout this continent, value cooperation over competition, family and land over money, and know the balm of good humor. The cross-section of perspectives is broad, with the Great Plains represented by six of the interviewees.

The opportunity to "listen to Native Americans" is a welcome one. Rather than being studied, analyzed, and reported upon, individuals in this book largely speak for themselves, with major sections appearing as edited interviews. Owings is clearly well informed, and

*Indian Voices: Listening to Native Americans.* By Alison Owings. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2011. xxv + 363 pp. Notes, index. \$26.95.

Have you ever noticed how often historians and anthropologists write about Indians in the past tense? This phenomenon is one of the most disempowering experiences for an Indian to encounter. Journalist Alison Owings's unique book helps to correct this misperception, while covering broad subjects of history and culture through the lives of sixteen Native

the level of intimacy revealed in a number of the chapters demonstrates her subjects' trust. Owings deserves to be commended for interviewing people generally unknown to those outside their tribal communities or their local neighborhoods, and for giving them the opportunity to have their stories told. Another new book, *Conversations with Remarkable Native Americans* (2012), by French ethnohistorian Joelle Rostkowski, presents edited transcriptions of interviews with such celebrated Plains dignitaries as N. Scott Momaday. After two centuries of books being written about Indians by others, both of these books add rich content to Native Studies. Their collective stories provide a unique opportunity for readers to question their own panoply of stereotypes.

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